

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Pontefract

LEA area: Wakefield MDC

Unique reference number: 108265

Headteacher: Mr M G Clarkson

Reporting inspector: Mr P M Allen
17531

Dates of inspection: 5th – 6th February 2003

Inspection number: 246782

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Infant and junior
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	3 - 11
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Newgate Pontefract West Yorkshire
Postcode:	WF8 4AA
Telephone number:	(01977) 723555
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Bratley
Date of previous inspection:	9th March 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Joseph's Voluntary Aided Catholic Primary is a slightly below average sized primary school serving an area of mixed housing in Pontefract. Pupils are drawn mainly from the local parish of St Joseph's, but also from two adjacent parishes. Around 40 children attend the school's Nursery on a part-time basis. Of the 201 pupils on roll, there are fewer girls than boys with a gender imbalance in some year groups. The vast majority of pupils are of white UK heritage background. There are a very small number of children with English as an additional language from a Filipino heritage background, with none at an early stage of language acquisition. Apart from the Nursery, there are seven classes, one for each year group. Nineteen pupils are identified as having special educational needs (this proportion being below the national average) with three having a statement of special educational need (in line with the national average). The proportion of pupils taking free school meals is well below the national average. Virtually all the children have had experience of pre-school education in the school's own Nursery. Attainment on entry to the Nursery class is broadly in line with what could be expected. Children make good progress in the Nursery and, as a consequence, overall attainment on entry to the Reception class is slightly above what could be expected. Over the two years prior to the inspection the school has benefited from a major refurbishment, leading to very good quality of accommodation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school which provides a very good standard of education. The headteacher, well supported by the staff and the governors, provides very good leadership and management. The overall very good quality of teaching ensures that all pupils progress well and reach standards that are mainly above average and, in mathematics, well above average. All pupils are fully included in all facets of school life. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- There is a very creditable proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching which enables the pupils to achieve well.
- Standards in mathematics are very high throughout the school.
- Very significant improvements have been made in information and communication technology.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and they make very good progress.
- The very good behaviour, attitudes and personal development of the pupils contribute positively to the quality of education.
- The high quality of the learning environment, including the refurbished accommodation, supports the teaching, learning and ethos of the school.

What could be improved

- Standards in written work.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning.
- The arrangements for homework.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 1998 and has made a good improvement since that time. Virtually all the suggested issues have been considered and addressed. Standards in geography and history now at least match the national standards and, in information and communication technology, they exceed them. There are effective practices for assessing pupils' attainment and progress. School

development planning, including financial planning, is now good. The formal monitoring of teaching is still underdeveloped. The roles of curriculum co-ordinators have been significantly developed. The accommodation has improved dramatically. Standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching has improved. The staff share a will and capacity to continue to strive to maintain and further build upon the school's many strengths.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	B	C	B
mathematics	C	B	A	A
science	C	A	B	A

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Virtually all the children in the Reception Year are likely to meet most of the nationally prescribed Early Learning Goals and between a third and a half are likely to exceed them. Standards vary with each year group, partly dependent on the proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above national averages in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above national averages in mathematics and science. Overall, standards are in line with national averages in English because, although standards in reading are good, standards in writing are not as high. This judgement reflects a trend over recent years. Standards in mathematics are very creditable across the school; the results at the end of Year 2 in 2002 were in the top five per cent nationally when compared with all schools and when compared with schools with similar intakes. Standards are not as high in writing across the school and there is recognition that standards could be higher in written work. Standards in information and communication technology are now good across the school. All children are enabled to achieve well, including those who are higher attainers, those with special educational needs and the small number who speak English as an additional language. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. The school is setting clear targets to maintain and build upon these results.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes towards school and are keen to take part in all activities. They work co-operatively, with boys and girls mixing well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Standards of behaviour are very good and sometimes excellent. These standards, coupled with the positive attitudes, have a strong impact on the quality of education.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is very good. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with all the adults in school. Each child's contribution is valued.
Attendance	The vast majority of pupils arrive in good time, enthusiastic to start the

	school day. Whilst most pupils have very good attendance records, the overall picture of good attendance is adversely affected by a small number who are regularly taken on holiday during term time.
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The very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development reflect the school's caring, Christian ethos.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Nursery & Reception	Years 1 – 2	Years 3 – 6
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory / Good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; satisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The quality of teaching observed during this short inspection was at least satisfactory, sometimes good and often very good with some excellent teaching. Overall the quality of teaching was less effective in the newly established Nursery and Reception unit. Excellent teaching was observed in a lesson in Year 2, a lesson in Year 6 and in a French lesson taken by a teacher from the partner secondary school. English and mathematics are taught very well and teachers use effective methods to teach the skills of literacy and numeracy. Teachers use methods which enable all pupils to learn effectively, including those who are higher attainers and those who speak English as an additional language. Teaching provides very well for pupils with special educational needs who are very well supported by good quality classroom assistants. The pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic about their learning with a will to achieve well. This is especially the case with the Year 6 pupils whose approach to learning is a credit to the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is carefully planned and broadly based. The curriculum within the newly formed unit for the Nursery and Reception children is becoming established and the school has firm plans to review its planning and organisation.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision is very good. The special educational needs co-ordinator is managing the work effectively, well supported by the good number of very effective classroom support assistants. The quality of the provision enables the pupils to make very good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good support is provided.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	There is very good provision for spiritual, moral and social development and good provision for cultural development. This quality of provision helps the pupils to become sensible and mature by the time they leave the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There is a very good level of care, which reflects the way that every child is valued. There are good arrangements for the tracking and monitoring of attainment and progress.

The information and communication technology provision has improved dramatically, benefiting from the new suite. There is a good number of extra-curricular activities. There is a very good partnership between the school and its supportive parents, but there is a need to improve communication about

homework.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The experienced and caring headteacher provides very good leadership and management and is well supported by the deputy. The curriculum co-ordinators are making valuable contributions to school improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is very supportive of the school. It recognises the need to continue to develop its role in monitoring the work of the school, including the teaching and learning.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Although a very good start has been made in school self-evaluation, there is a need for more rigour in the monitoring of teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	There is very good strategic use of all available resources. Funds are used very prudently and spending is closely linked to the school's priorities.

There is an adequate level of teaching staff who are well supported by the good number of classroom assistants. The school is very well resourced, very clean and well maintained. The school benefits from its excellent recent refurbishment which impacts very positively on the quality of education provided. The school gives good consideration to the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children like school and are making good progress. Standards of behaviour. The quality of teaching and the approachability of the school. The leadership and management. The expectation that children will work hard and become responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of parents at the meeting and during the inspection expressed their views that homework is not consistent and that the arrangements are unclear. The responses to the questionnaire indicate that a significant minority of parents do not agree that they are well informed about children's progress, that the school works closely with parents or that the school provides an interesting range of extra-curricular activities.

The inspectors agree that the school's expectations on homework are unclear and that there needs to be a review of the arrangements. The school has firm plans to create a new homework policy which will be shared with the parents. The inspectors' views are that the school does work closely with parents and that there is a good level of information about the progress the children are making; the vast majority of the parents agree that the staff are very open and accessible. The number of extra-curricular activities is good and compares favourably with other schools of a similar size. The vast majority of views expressed were very supportive of the school and its teachers. Many feel fortunate that their children are able to attend such a good school and the inspection team shares their positive views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

There is a very creditable proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching which enables the pupils to achieve well.

1. The main reason for the high standards across the school is the quality of teaching and learning. The high quality teaching enables all pupils to achieve well relative to their abilities, including those who are higher attainers, those with special educational needs and also the small number who speak English as an additional language. The creditable quality of teaching with its high expectations influences the quality of what pupils produce, how productive they are and the levels of progress they make.
2. During the two days of a short inspection it is only possible to observe a relatively small number of lessons. In this inspection the quality of teaching observed was at least satisfactory (it was satisfactory in a small number of lessons), sometimes good and often very good with some excellent teaching. Three fifths of the teaching was at least very good with a small number of excellent lessons. Excellent teaching was observed in a Year 2 literacy lesson, a Year 6 numeracy lesson and in a French lesson taught to Year 6 by a visiting teacher from the partner secondary school. Very high quality teaching in Year 2 and Year 6 is one of the main reasons why the pupils achieve well.
3. The very strong teaching has clear objectives which are well met. The pupils are very effectively acquiring new knowledge and skills in a systematic, progressive way. This was the case in a French lesson taken by a teacher from the partner secondary school (a language college) as part of a programme to teach languages to groups of pupils in all the feeder schools. The pupils were enabled to use seven 'weather' phrases in French, increasing their understanding of letter patterns with regard to pronunciation. The teacher, working with great pace and enthusiasm, engaged the pupils' interest throughout the session. The pupils responded well to the teacher's modelling of language; 'Répétez!' was a key request. The outcome of this is that most pupils are learning to speak the language with very good accents. All pupils achieved well, not least those with special educational needs. The success of this particular lesson reflects very well on the success of the programme.
4. In very successful teaching, the pupils are well managed and very well supervised. This was the case in an excellent guided reading session with Year 2 pupils which contributed to a very calm and purposeful start to the school day. The pupils, in four ability groups, were very well supported by the teacher, the classroom assistant, a student and a volunteer parent. Pupils in each group worked hard, stayed on task, showed excellent attitudes and behaviour and enjoyed learning. The adults had high expectations to which the pupils responded. The lesson catered for the needs of all pupils, including those who still need a lot of practice and a lot of help. The classroom is a well arranged, stimulating environment which celebrates pupils' achievements, where children's needs are met and their self-esteem is promoted.
5. In the very best lessons, pupils are expected to work hard and show a pride in their work. This was the case in an excellent Year 6 numeracy lesson. In a quick, well-focussed mental arithmetic session at the outset, the teacher, making very good use of an interactive whiteboard, enabled the pupils to round numbers to the nearest tenth or whole number. The pupils responded well to the series of graded examples. 'Thumbs up' or 'thumbs down' is used to gain class verification of correct answers.
6. In the group work the teacher provided the maximum challenge to the pupils and moved around effectively supporting where help was needed; very high quality support from the classroom assistant enabled the lower attaining pupils to increase their mathematical understanding and to make very good progress. This lesson was a good example of charismatic teaching, which is underpinned by mutual respect between the teacher and the pupils. This quality of teaching with

its very good subject knowledge, its high expectations and excellent rapport between teacher and taught, undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to the standards being achieved.

7. Throughout the school the relationships between the pupils and teachers and amongst the pupils themselves are very good. Pupils display positive attitudes to their work and want to do well. All work is well presented with considerable care. Teachers mark pupils' work effectively, supporting them in their achievements and indicating how they might improve their work. Classroom assistants give very good support to pupils, using initiative and questioning effectively to clarify the understanding of lower attaining pupils. Teachers evaluate their lessons and use this to inform their future planning.
8. Fundamental to the quality of education provided is the quality of teaching, it being the most important influence of the school on the pupils' attainment, progress and quality of learning. The effectiveness of the teaching impacts very clearly on the rate, breadth, depth and consolidation of pupils' learning helping them to gain the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic and effective way. This is one of the school's many strengths and the main reason why pupils are enabled to achieve well.

Standards in mathematics are very high throughout the school.

9. Standards in mathematics across the school are very high. The 2002 national test results show that virtually all pupils achieved the appropriate Levels 2 and 4 for seven and 11 year olds with a good number reaching higher levels. Standards are well above those found in similar schools. At Key Stage 1 in 2002, the results put the school in the top five per cent nationally. Although standards vary from year to year because of the varying number of special needs pupils in classes, standards at both key stages have been very creditable over number of years. Standards were judged to be good at the previous inspection.
10. One of the main reasons for the school's success in mathematics is the quality of teaching. Most of the teaching seen was very good. In one lesson it was excellent. Teachers are confident and knowledgeable. They use the National Numeracy Strategy well. Planning is effective, setting clear objectives which are shared with the pupils at the beginning of the lesson and revisited in the good quality sessions at the end of the lesson. Effective whole class instruction and skilful questioning help to raise the quality of pupils' thinking. Teachers encourage pupils to find economical ways of doing simple calculations. Good use is made of mathematical games to develop quick recall and to give pupils confidence in manipulating numbers. These sessions are particularly popular and pupils join in enthusiastically and focus well on the challenges given. Emphasis is placed on developing correct mathematical vocabulary, a whole school target in this year's mathematics action plan and also in giving pupils the opportunity to explore and predict. This was seen in a lesson where pupils were making three-dimensional shapes from nets and predicting what shape the nets would make and whether they would have a lid.
11. Pupils gradually become competent mathematicians, taking pleasure in a broad range of interesting mathematical activities provided. Work is appropriate to the pupils' needs but is generally very challenging. The scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there are high expectations of the amount and quality of work expected from all pupils regardless of ability. Pupils with special educational needs are given considerable support and are expected to listen carefully and take a full part in the lesson. This is especially so for the oldest pupils. In a challenging lesson on decimals, pupils with special educational needs were able, with encouragement and support, to achieve very well. Opportunities are provided to use mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum such as science and geography and good use is made of information and communication technology.
12. A second contributory factor to the high standards is the quality of co-ordination of the subject. The co-ordinator scrutinises planning and pupils' work and has good communication with teachers. She analyses assessments and test results to help in deciding priorities in the action plan for future development. The opportunity to observe lessons would add to her overview of the subject across the school. She considers that the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy

has had a significant effect on the quality of teaching and pupils' enjoyment of mathematics. Through the strategy the school has seen an improvement in both the pace of lessons and the level of challenge especially in mental mathematics. The school has a good range of resources and materials.

13. The school's ethos also plays a part in pupils' achievement, in particular the strong work ethic and the consistency of practice throughout the school. There are high expectations of behaviour and level of industry. Pupils produce a lot of work which is usually well presented. Marking of work is consistent and good use is made of encouraging comments. Pupils' workbooks contain a record sheet which is kept up to date and records progress since the beginning of the year. Pupils co-operate very well in shared activities and older pupils are capable of sustained periods of concentration without close supervision. The sympathetic attitude and support from staff towards pupils with special educational needs gives them confidence and enables them to rise to the challenges they are set. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are good.

Very significant improvements have been made in information and communication technology.

14. Standards in information and communication technology are good and the subject is rapidly becoming a strength of the school. Considerable progress has been made since the previous inspection when standards were judged to be below average. The introduction of the new computer suite and an all round improvement in resources has had a very positive impact on the quality of curriculum that the school can provide and on the standards achieved.
15. Much of the good progress which has been made is due to the commitment of the headteacher and also the current co-ordinator who has a very good grasp of the subject and a very clear vision for its development. He has a very good overview of the work of the school through scrutiny of teachers' planning and through his classroom support role, which has been part of the staff development process. A comprehensive development plan produced in 2000 has guided the work and the ambitious targets for improvement have been met. It is now time to review this plan in the light of the progress that has been made. The school is now very well equipped with resources both in the computer suite and in classrooms and in the main this equipment is well used.
16. Another significant factor in the success in information and communication technology is the quality of teaching which has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Teachers are now much more confident and knowledgeable and their expertise is enabling them to make good use of the high quality resources available. This is having a positive impact on the teaching methods used. Overhead projectors and electronic interactive equipment are used effectively for classroom instruction in various subjects.
17. In the small amount of teaching seen, lessons were well organised and planned, allowing work to proceed smoothly and at a good pace. In a Year 6 lesson on the use of spreadsheets, pupils had to remain very attentive to keep up with the speed of instruction. The teacher explained the reasons for using the program and its use in the workplace. In order to give pupils maximum individual time on the computer they worked in groups, half in the computer suite and half in the classroom working on a useful speed game to increase efficient keyboard skills. The teacher's very high expectations of both productivity and behaviour enabled him to operate between the two rooms knowing that pupils would remain on task.
18. Scrutiny of current planning indicates that pupils are given a broad range of worthwhile experiences throughout the school. Displays of work show a steady progression. Where appropriate, work supports other subjects; for example, the use of the Internet for research in history, geography and art, graphic representations of characters such as Harry Potter and the use of branching data bases in geography and science. The young pupils are given a good grounding in the various sources of information available and this theme is continually developed at various stages throughout the school. Each pupil has a computer file where all work is kept. The Key Stage 2 pupils can readily access and print out any specific piece needed. Good use is

made of information and communication technology to support the teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs.

19. The school has a very strong commitment to community use of the computers. Pupils are free to use the computer room after school for homework. This offer is extended to ex-pupils who are now at secondary school. In conjunction with the local Workers' Education Association, the school puts on computer courses for parents one morning per week. The aim is to make parents more skilled in information and communication technology so that they can provide more support for their own children as well as to hopefully encourage them to be volunteers in school, supporting the pupils in their work.
20. The school is justifiably proud of its recent achievements in information and communication technology. The vision and commitment together with the hard work of all staff is enabling the school to achieve well and move forward.

There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and they make very good progress.

21. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs and this is reflected in the very good progress they make. Nineteen pupils are currently on the special educational needs register of whom three have statements relating to their needs. The school successfully ensures that these pupils receive their full curricular entitlement. Teachers and support staff monitor progress closely and keep informative records. Each pupil has an individual education plan which contains appropriate targets for learning. These are updated regularly and copies given to all relevant staff and also to parents who request them. The school policy, recently updated to reflect the new arrangements for special educational needs, ensures that the requirements of the new Code of Practice for these pupils are met.
22. Early identification of pupils with special educational needs is seen as a priority in the school. Teachers use the school's assessments and standardised tests to identify pupils who are to be placed on the special educational needs register. The success of screening of the youngest pupils using a baseline assessment, together with early intervention and effective teaching, is seen in the movement on and off the special educational needs register.
23. The success of the special educational needs programme is due mainly to the organisation and quality of teaching. The co-ordinator is very knowledgeable, keen and well organised and manages the work well. She works closely together with teachers and classroom support assistants to provide a coherent approach which helps to raise standards. She recognises the importance of the work of the good quality support staff and together they have become a very effective team. Good communication is maintained through a weekly meeting used to discuss practice and problems and to keep up to date with new information. One member of the support staff has a special responsibility for liaison, a valuable initiative, as the special educational needs co-ordinator is a full-time class teacher. The school has built up very good links with the appropriate external agencies and values the very good support they give.
24. Throughout the school pupils benefit from a structured programme of activities carried out either in class or by withdrawal to small groups or individual work. The class teacher, special educational needs co-ordinator and support assistants plan work together and there is clear evidence of how learning targets are fitted into class lessons. In class, the high quality of teaching, well-planned and resourced activities, together with good pace and high expectations of the amount and quality of work produced by the pupils, contribute very well to their progress. The promotion of self-esteem, positive attitudes and behaviour also contribute to the progress made. In some lessons pupils work in mixed ability groups and higher attaining pupils are very supportive towards them, reflecting the positive ethos of the school.
25. A significant factor in the success of the special educational needs programme is the quality of work done and the initiative shown by the special educational needs support assistants. They are

constantly seeking to further develop their skills and knowledge and together with the special educational needs co-ordinator look for more efficient and beneficial methods of instruction. One group of older pupils said how much they enjoyed the activities and felt that they helped them to use more imaginative words in their writing. In one valuable lesson, three staff allocated special time to work with individual pupils and worked together as a group in order to develop the pupils' social skills. Each pupil had appropriate individual attention which kept them focused on their task but they also learned to take turns and to respect the contributions made by other pupils. They made very good progress. The session also provided a useful opportunity for staff to plan together and to appreciate each other's teaching styles. The school is well equipped with good quality resources which are well used including information and communication technology equipment.

26. The aim of the school is to provide high quality appropriate education for all pupils and for pupils with special educational needs it succeeds very well. The very strong positive ethos ensures a secure learning environment. The school works closely with home and a significant number of parents make a very valuable contribution by working with pupils with special educational needs in school. The quality of provision combined with the close working partnership of all concerned with pupils with special educational needs ensures success in meeting their needs and has a very positive effect on the standards achieved, making it a strength of the school.

The very good behaviour, attitudes and personal development of the pupils contribute positively to the quality of education.

27. Throughout the school pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. Pupils like coming to school and enjoy their work. During the inspection, a number of parents commented that their children become upset if they are unable to attend school due to illness. Pupils listen attentively to information and respond enthusiastically when challenged; for example, during a Year 2 numeracy lesson, all the pupils' hands were raised, eager to answer the questions during the mental arithmetic session. Pupils are able to work well independently and show good co-operation when required to work in groups. Pupils in Year 4 were observed working well together in pairs, considering the impact of book design on the interest of the reader. The pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic about their learning with a will to achieve well. This is especially the case with the Year 6 pupils whose approach to learning is a credit to the school.
28. The pupils enter the classrooms in the morning, settling down very quickly, creating an efficient, purposeful start to the school day. For example, the Year 5 class sat down quietly reading their books whilst the register was taken and the first lesson commenced without the teacher having to give any instructions or make any adverse comments to pupils. The pupils are keen to participate in the lessons and in the extra-curricular activities such as the after school swimming club. The Year 1 pupils were enthralled by the teacher's use of a specialist projector to demonstrate how icons are used as a means of presenting information.
29. The behaviour of pupils is very good, both in and out of the classrooms. There have been no exclusions from the school, no misbehaviour was witnessed during the inspection and, in the inspection questionnaire, 100 per cent of parents agreed that the pupils' behaviour is good. Discussions with the midday supervisors and with the pupils themselves confirmed that instances of oppressive behaviour are very rare. Sometimes behaviour can be exemplary, as it was in around a third of the lessons observed. Pupils' behaviour in the dining hall and in the playgrounds is very good; the pupils know the school's requirements and they respond accordingly. Movement in and around the buildings is very orderly and this contributes to the effective operation of the school. Relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves are very good. Pupils of all ages and both genders integrate harmoniously. The older pupils are protective towards the younger ones.
30. The pupils' personal development is very good; they have a high level of maturity and confidence. The pupils are trustworthy and courteous. During the inspection, it was notable that the pupils always held open the door for adults and for each other. On receiving their lunches, pupils say

'thank you' to the servers. The school has very good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. This helps the pupils gain confidence and self-esteem. Pupils are given increasing responsibilities as they move through the school. They benefit from their extensive involvement in charity fund-raising and especially from the very close links with Diocesan Catholic Care. Pupils learn about the wider world and the importance of environmental matters; for example, pupils in Year 5 talked about their project work on recycling. All pupils help maintain their classrooms in a clean and tidy state. The parents were in unanimous agreement that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.

31. The school has a caring Christian, family ethos. The pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour and personal development make a significant contribution to the quality of education; this underpins the high standards that are achieved.

The high quality of the learning environment, including the refurbished accommodation, supports the teaching, learning and ethos of the school.

32. At the time of the school's previous report, the accommodation was said to 'impose some restraints' and the Key Stage 2 classrooms were judged to be 'in poor repair'. This concern has been addressed so that the learning environment is now excellent in many respects. Staff and governors were very closely involved by making suggestions on the very comprehensive programme of refurbishment. The building has been thoroughly revamped and extended, with high quality, well chosen fittings and fixtures. The redesign has been skilfully managed to provide a most pleasant teaching and learning environment. The sympathetic and imaginative use of materials has ensured that the original character of the external architecture has been maintained and enhanced. Very good use is made of the accommodation.
33. The school is maintained to a very high standard of cleanliness by the dedicated caretaker and his staff. It is particularly noticeable that the teachers and pupils maintain the classrooms in a very tidy, orderly manner. All resources are suitably stored, so that they can be easily accessed and they are used well. The resources are of a high standard and are mostly in very good condition; for example, there are no old, torn books in the libraries. At break times the playground remains free of litter and, after lunch, the pupils leave the dining hall in a clean condition. The pupils have a clear pride in their school and show appropriate respect for property and for the feelings of others. They keep their cloakrooms in a tidy condition, ensuring that clothing does not fall off the pegs.
34. The internal accommodation is now spacious, with adequately sized classrooms and good circulation space, the benefits of which are fully utilised by the staff. In the Key Stage 1 area, there is additional space which is used effectively for groups of children to be taught separately from the rest of the class. Of particular note is the excellent new computer suite, which has 12 personal computers plus five laptops; the staff and pupils make very good use of this new facility. The supplementary rooms, such as the main school office, are of good size and are well resourced. The main hall is of sufficient size to enable the largest class of the older pupils to fit in comfortably for their physical education lessons; the hall's sprung floor is superb and the apparatus in excellent condition. The buildings are light and airy, with appropriate temperature control. The previous criticism of inadequate power points and few running water facilities is no longer valid; the new provision now greatly assists, rather than inhibits, the delivery of the curriculum in relation to the more practical activities.
35. There are attractive, well-presented displays of the pupils' work and other learning resource posters. Many of the displays are the result of pupils' curricular work in information and communication technology, including the Key Stage 2 projects using multi-media and desktop publishing techniques. In the Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage areas the displays are very colourful, such as the 'Spectacle' topic in the Nursery, the fruit collage in the Reception class and the personalised shape profiles in the Year 2 class. Throughout the school there are many displays, artefacts and religious symbols, which provide a focus for the traditional, committed Catholic community aspect. Also proudly displayed are the school's achievement awards for

'Investors in People' and the 'Basic Skills Quality Mark'. The school's own cultural heritage is celebrated by the photographs and sketches of the school's past which adorn the main entrance hall.

36. There are many value-added factors that have been included in the refurbished accommodation. The school is now fully accessible for disabled pupils should the need arise. The building security is very good with CCTV covering the main entrances, allowing remote control of the doors. As part of the school's healthy lifestyle promotion, chilled, purified water is available at all times.
37. Externally the school grounds have been largely redeveloped to provide an interesting environment. The two playgrounds are not particularly spacious, but the pupils benefit from additional facilities, such as the well-planned adventure playground and the quiet areas where they play together well. In addition there is a very good play area, separately fenced, for the Foundation Stage children. The school is situated within a densely packed urban area and the retention of landscaping and natural environmental areas has a pleasing, calming effect.
38. The high quality of the learning environment, including the refurbished accommodation and the resources, supports the teaching, learning and ethos of the school. This makes a significant contribution to maintaining a vibrant, effective school, where the pupils' well being and happiness are paramount.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Standards in written work.

39. Improving standards in written work has become a national issue in primary schools and it is appropriate that the school has recognised this area as a priority for improvement. This is identified in the Literacy Action Plan 2002–2003 with its whole school termly targets. A start has been made, but more remains to be done.
40. In the end of Year 2 writing results of 2002, whilst virtually all pupils reached Level 2, the expected level for seven year olds, very few reached the higher Level 3. This has been the pattern over recent years. National performance data show that, whilst the overall performance of pupils over the three years from 2000 to 2002 exceeded the national average, this was more marked in reading and mathematics than it was in writing.
41. Results over recent years at the end of Year 6 have been higher in mathematics and science than they have been in English. Standards have been consistently high in reading, but not in writing. The vast majority have achieved Level 4, the expected level for 11 year olds but in 2002, as in previous years, over twice as many pupils reached the higher Level 5 in the reading element of the tests than in the writing element.
42. A scrutiny of work done by the pupils across the school shows that whilst many opportunities are given to practise handwriting and formal activities such as grammar and punctuation, there are fewer opportunities for creative, personal and narrative writing. There are some interesting writing tasks set, such as in Year 2 where pupils write about 'My Special Friend', 'Desperate for a Dog' and 'Grandfather's Story', but overall across the school these opportunities are not fully developed. There is very little extended writing in the pupils' books. In subjects such as history, geography and science there is an emphasis on pupils filling in worksheets and occasionally copying text, rather than pupils being able to make a personal response in writing.
43. Strategies are just beginning to be put into place to enhance the pupils' skills and increase the opportunities for writing with higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. A further review of the way literacy time is used could create more opportunities for pupils to make responses in writing. A positive start has been made, but the school needs to continue to raise the profile of writing, including the promotion of extended writing and the development of detail. More writing tasks need to be built into work across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils' writing skills will

benefit from more opportunities to write for a wider variety of purposes and audiences with higher expectations and clearer targets. More of the school's higher attainers can achieve better results and improvement in written work can impact to make standards even higher across the school.

The monitoring of teaching and learning.

44. The previous report identified a need for the more systematic monitoring of teaching, including that done by co-ordinators. The role of the co-ordinators has been developed, enabling them to make valuable contributions; for example, there has been systematic monitoring through the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work. However, there have been few opportunities for co-ordinators to monitor classroom practice.
45. The formal monitoring of teaching and learning is still relatively underdeveloped, being insufficiently focused and rigorous. The headteacher undertakes a great deal of informal monitoring, often giving verbal feedback to staff. However, with the exception of observations made of a recently newly qualified teacher, there are no written outcomes from this. A main area for development for the school is to more formally monitor teaching and learning and to make more use of 'modelling' or demonstrating the very good and excellent teaching as observed during the inspection. Some opportunities have been given for staff to work alongside the information and communication technology co-ordinator, but otherwise this is not common practice.
46. The teaching observed during the inspection was undoubtedly very creditable, being very good overall. Nevertheless, there was some variation in the quality; a small number of lessons were judged to be satisfactory and a small number were judged to be excellent. The school has a caring, Christian ethos where each child is valued as an individual. It aspires to benefit all its pupils with the best it can offer, through consistently high quality teaching which promotes consistently high quality learning. The informal monitoring of teaching undertaken does not identify clear targets. Focused monitoring of teaching and learning can, very importantly, provide positive feedback which recognises successful and very successful teaching. Additionally it can provide targets for improvement, targets which are monitored and reviewed. This can enhance teacher performance across the school and have a more widespread and positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress with the potential to make this very effective school even more effective.

The arrangements for homework.

47. There is a very good partnership between the school and its supportive parents. The vast majority feel that the school is very approachable and that they are well informed about what is going on. However, there is a need to improve communication about homework. A significant number of parents both at the meeting and during the inspection expressed their views that homework is not consistent and that the arrangements are unclear.
48. The inspectors agree that the school's expectations are unclear and that there needs to be a review of the arrangements. At the present time there is no clear means of communication about homework, such as through a homework journal or diary. The provision of homework is very much determined by individual teachers; the school lacks a policy to guide the practice. The arrangements are clearer in Year 6, where most parents are happy with the amount of homework that is set, enabling the pupils to be prepared for the rigours of homework in Year 7 at the secondary school.
49. The school is accepting of the point being made. As a consequence of these concerns, there are firm plans to create a homework policy which will be shared with the parents. This will enable the parents to be in a better position to understand the school's plans and expectations and, therefore, better able to support their children.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors' action plan will set out how the areas for improvement identified during the inspection are to be addressed.

50. In order to build on the school's many strengths and the quality of education provided and to further raise standards, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

i. Further develop and improve written work across the school by :

- continuing to raise the profile of writing in the school;
- reviewing the time allocation given to different types of literacy work;
- raising expectations of what the higher attainers can achieve;
- creating more opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes and audiences;
- giving pupils more opportunities to write and make a personal response in the foundation subjects;
- developing detailed target setting based on National Curriculum level descriptors; and
- maximising opportunities for extended writing including the development of detail.

(Paragraphs 39 - 43)

ii. Further develop the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning through the introduction of a more formal system for monitoring which :

- promotes the celebration of success;
- involves structured lesson observation;
- provides feedback and target setting;
- enables the review of targets; and
- contributes more significantly to the professional development of the staff.

(Paragraphs 44 - 46)

iii. Develop a clear policy for homework to promote consistency and give the parents a clear understanding of the school's expectations.

(Paragraphs 47 - 49)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	20
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	3	9	5	3	0	0	0
Percentage	15	45	25	15	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents five percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	20	201
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	18

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	YR - Y6
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	19

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	12	11	23

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	11	12
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	22	22	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (83)	96 (87)	100 (90)
	National	84 (84)	86 (86)	90 (91)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 2 and above	Boys	11	12	12
	Girls	11	11	11
	Total	22	23	23
Percentage of pupils at NC level 2 or above	School	96 (87)	100 (90)	100 (93)
	National	85 (85)	89 (89)	89 (89)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	11	21	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	9	11
	Girls	18	19	20
	Total	26	28	31
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (90)	88 (76)	97 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	8	8	10
	Girls	18	18	20
	Total	26	26	30
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (83)	81 (83)	94 (93)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
193	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25:1
Average class size	28

Education support staff: YR – Y6

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	141

Qualified teachers and support staff: Nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	75

Financial information

Financial year	2001-2002
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	£
Total income	493,855
Total expenditure	484,070
Expenditure per pupil	2,051
Balance brought forward from previous year	-5,420
Balance carried forward to next year	4,365

Number of pupils per FTE adult	10:1
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	174
Number of questionnaires returned	93

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	28	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	39	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	67	33	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	43	8	0	1
The teaching is good.	62	35	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	35	15	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	24	6	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	28	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	43	16	1	0
The school is well led and managed.	53	37	5	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	35	0	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	19	35	14	14	13